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OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE



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DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

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State program helps deliver more than \$5.4 million to Pa. courts, helping thousands of crime victims

York, Pa. — Pennsylvania Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm, Revenue Secretary Dan Hassell and York County officials today highlighted the positive impact of the state income tax refund intercept program, which has delivered more than \$5.4 million to Pennsylvania's courts since its inception last year.

The program helps to ensure justice in part by deducting court-ordered restitution from the personal income tax refunds of people who have been convicted of a crime, allowing the money to be transferred to crime victims.

"It's gratifying to see this program is not only reimbursing crime victims for their losses, but it is supporting these citizens by validating their experiences," Storm said. "Many of us who work in victims' services have watched as recommendations to support crime victims have gone unheard over the years. We thank Representative Barbin and the General Assembly for recognizing the need to do more to back victims."

The state income tax refund intercept program became law in 2016 when Governor Tom Wolf signed legislation initially sponsored by Rep. Bryan Barbin, D-Cambria/Somerset, amending the Crime Victims Act. The law, Act 93 of 2016, requires the Department of Revenue to deduct from personal income tax refunds any court-ordered obligation arising from a criminal prosecution or proceeding.

In other words, if a person has been convicted of a crime and owes restitution to a victim, court costs or fines, the intercept program requires the Department of Revenue to check that person's account to see whether they are due a personal income tax refund. After the department satisfies any outstanding state income tax liabilities, the law requires the department to direct all or part of the remaining refund to the Clerk of Courts in the country where the crime was committed. The clerks then transfer any restitution owed to crime victims.

Storm and Hassell pointed toward a local case involving the owners of a York County commercial concrete curbing company as an example of the positive impact of the program.

A former employee who worked for the company stole generators and power tools from the business to sell to a trading post. The state intercept program helped the owners of the business receive approximately \$1,000 in restitution to help replace the stolen items.

“We estimate this program has the potential to generate more than \$9 million over the next year for the commonwealth’s courts, which will help thousands of additional crime victims,” said Secretary Hassell, who oversees the Department of Revenue. “This is another example of the Wolf Administration taking steps to provide Government that Works.”

Don O’Shell, the York County Clerk of Courts, recounted being part of the Restitution in Pennsylvania Task Force, which was assembled in 2011 by the Office of Victim Advocate with the goal of maximizing the reimbursement of financial losses to crime victims.

One of the task force’s recommendations in [a 2013 report](#) grew to be the law that authorized the state income tax refund intercept program. O’Shell said it’s encouraging to see the program working as intended in York County, where approximately 1,500 offsets have resulted in roughly \$330,000 being directed to the county’s courts since the program’s inception.

“This is a key, commonsense legislative fix that helps give crime victims the justice they deserve,” O’Shell said. “This program is a win for hardworking Pennsylvanians who have the misfortune of being the victim of a crime.”

Note: *Video and audio from the event will be available for download later today in an email from the Pennsylvania Internet News Service (PINS). Register for PINS emails through cms@pacast.com.*

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